

HOUSE RESOLUTION 265

By Shaw

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize St. John No. 2
Missionary Baptist Church in Denmark upon its
135th Anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations who, through their unflinching capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, the good people of St. John No. 2 Missionary Baptist Church comprise one such congregation, and they are celebrating the Church's 135th anniversary this year; and

WHEREAS, the earliest members of this church were slaves who met under a brush arbor at the close of the Civil War, determined to praise and worship God in their own way; seeking a more suitable and larger place to erect The House of God, Reverend Mose Walker gave the land at the sacred spot of the original structure in Denmark, Tennessee in Madison County; and

WHEREAS, with the help of other pioneer ministers barely out of slavery, including Rev. Sye Chatman, Rev. Aubrey Walker, Rev. Jake Dawson, Rev. Joe Transou, and Rev. Mose Walker, Reverend John Henry Bond in 1876, led the members in constructing the first church building; and

WHEREAS, as the church continued to march onward and upward in 1910, the Rev. Ferguson went forward in rebuilding the church, while the gospel rang out far and near, compelling sinners and Christians to walk the dusty roads, traveling on horses, wagons, and sometimes buggies to hear the Word of God coming from the lips of great spiritual leaders such as Rev. Perkins, Rev. Oren Howell, and Rev. Wake Bond; and

WHEREAS, answering the call of the church for a pastor at this time, God gave them a strong, spiritual, and dynamic preacher, Rev. E. Motley, who delivered his sermons in a sanctuary packed to capacity as they listened to him expound the Word of God; and

WHEREAS, during the height of the depression years, church members were fortunate to have as their minister the Rev. L. Nelson, who came to St. John No. 2 Missionary Baptist Church as a pastor, community leader, civic worker, welfare leader, friend, business advisor, and Christian disciple; during his 19-year tenure, he ultimately directed the membership into the mammoth task of building a new church, which was finished in 1949, complete with much-needed gas heat and wooden pews; and

WHEREAS, under the subsequent pastorate of Rev. J. L. Webb, who was in demand in Tennessee and throughout the nation as a gospel preacher, the congregation gladly shared their pews with guests from far and near who came to hear him preach; and

WHEREAS, the pastorate of the church was then extended to Rev. B. F. Odeneal of Somerville; from 1961 to 1975, under his administration, the house of worship was beautified; a chain link fence was installed around the burial ground; the parking lot was improved, and additional ground was purchased to enlarge the facilities; a lighted sign was erected on the church grounds, and pews, church furniture, gas heaters, a public address system, and a piano were purchased; and

WHEREAS, in February of 1976, an energetic and articulate young man, Rev. Roy L. Bell, from Bemis, Tennessee, accepted the challenge to guide St. John Church during a time of marked spiritual growth and burgeoning attendance; he and his wife, Vernell, along with an expansive board of deacons, were instrumental in beginning a Bible Study Program for the church, and presiding over extensive renovations, including the installation of a baptistery, implementing a Vacation Bible School, purchasing hymnals and Bibles for the congregation, developing a junior church for ages 3 to 16, organizing a junior choir, formulating an Outreach ministry, initiating an Adoption Program to relieve and aid single parents in the spiritual upbringing of their children, and offering a tape ministry to allow shut-ins to share the Sunday morning worship experience; and

WHEREAS, under Rev. Bell's administration, the scholarship fund was instituted to aid and encourage youth to further their education; copiers, a computer, an organ, a tractor, mower, and piano were acquired; choir stands were enlarged; pews were covered; a storage building was erected; the parking lot was paved; and a parsonage was purchased; and

WHEREAS, when the church's sanctuary was found in 2001 to be unsafe and beyond repair, land was purchased across from the structure in 2004, and a new church building was completed in January of 2006; and

WHEREAS, a pictorial account of all work on the new structure, from beginning to end, has been preserved in order to continue the church's critical ancestral heritage of providing direction and guidance to so many young men and women who are soon sent into the world to be God-filled leaders; and

WHEREAS, the St. John No. 2 Missionary Baptist Church has significantly contributed to the social, cultural, and spiritual vitality of the Madison County community and the State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby congratulate St. John No. 2 Missionary Baptist Church in Nashville upon its 135th anniversary of God's blessed guidance, and we thank all of the former and current pastors, trustees, ministers, deacons, clerks, and members of this estimable congregation for their faithful service to God, their community, and the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.